

15. *BAUHINIA PHOENICEA*: A NEW LARVAL HOST PLANT FOR THE BUTTERFLY, BLUE NAWAB *POLYURA SCHREIBER WARDII* (GODART 1819) (LEPIDOPTERA: NYMPHALIDAE)

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According to Wynter-Blyth (1957) and Evans (1932), the Blue Nawab *Polyura schreiber wardii* (Godart 1819) is very rare in its range from Assam to Myanmar and S.E. Asia. It has been mentioned that this butterfly is rare in Coorg and other parts of the Western Ghats (Wynter-Blyth 1957). During the last 10 years, there have been only a handful of sightings of this butterfly from the Western Ghats, and no record of its life cycle in recent times. It flies high in the canopy, among flowering trees, and very rarely comes down to mud puddle.



Fig. 1: Prominent yellow crescent-shaped marking on the larvae of *Polyura schreiber wardii*

A monsoon butterfly survey by Warblers and Waders Nature Lovers Forum, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, was conducted during July 2010, at Ponmudi-Kallar reserve forest (8°60'-8°79' N; 77°07'-77°20' E), specifically in Ashambu Hills, 52 km from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, in the southern range of the Western Ghats. During this survey two larvae of a Nymphalid butterfly were found on a climbing shrub, *Bauhinia phoenicea* (Wight & Arn) belonging to Family Fabaceae, locally known as "Scarlet Bauhinia".

We collected the larvae and reared them in captivity to confirm the species. The larvae were velvety green and had a yellow crescent-shaped marking (Fig. 1) on the third abdominal segment. The head had two pairs of reddish brown horns. The larvae we collected were final instar larvae. The larvae pupated on the 7th day. The pupa was pendant-like,

thick, stout and green with lighter markings and a light line laterally connecting the abdominal spiracles, which were brown, as was the top of the head and tail. A longitudinal row of red spots was present on each side (Fig. 2). The duration of pupal stage was 14 days. No change occurred in the pupae during this period. On the morning of the 14th day, the colour of the pupae changed to dead leaf brown. The pupae became transparent and the white band on the wings was visible through the transparent pupal case. The adult butterfly emerged at midday.



Fig. 2: Longitudinal row of red spots during the pupal stage

The butterfly was later identified as the Blue Nawab *Polyura schreiber wardii*. Earlier records state that the known larval food plants are *Rourea santaloides* (Family: Connaraceae) and *Wagatea spicata* (Family: Leguminosae) (Davidson *et al.* 1896)

The successful rearing and emergence of the Blue Nawab *Polyura schreiber wardii* on *Bauhinia phoenicea* confirms it as a hitherto unreported larval host plant.

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16. RECORD OF *HEXABRANCHUS SANGUINEUS* (RÜPPELL & LEUCKART, 1828) FROM LAKSHADWEEP ARCHIPELAGO, INDIA

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Introduction

Indian opisthobranchs have received attention only in the recent times with extensive work by Apte and Bhawe along the west coast of India (Apte 2009; Apte *et al.* 2010). Besides Apte (2009), the only work on the Lakshadweep Opisthobranch fauna was by Gardnier (1903) and Rao *et al.* (1974). Valdés (2002) in his paper on *Hexabranchnus* discussed taxonomic confusion regarding this genus. Valdés (2002) has provided a comprehensive synonymy for the species. *H. sanguineus* is a widespread species in tropical Indo-west Pacific and it shows remarkable colour variation.

Hexabranchnus sanguineus commonly called as the 'Spanish Dancer', is one of the largest nudibranch growing up to 55 cm (Double 1992; Debelius 2004) and an active swimmer. There are unpublished records of the species growing up to 90 cm.

Results and Discussion

On July 14, 2010, during a night search at low tide on the eastern reef of Agatti Island, Lakshadweep Archipelago, west coast of India, we came across two specimens of *H. sanguineus* (Family Hexabranchnidae).

The specimen from Lakshadweep shows distinct colour variation from the specimens found in Andaman. Colour of the specimens from Lakshadweep is dark cherry red as compared to pink coloured individuals from Andaman. Both the specimens are illustrated here for comparison (Figs 1 and 2). Gardnier (1903) reported two species of *Hexabranchnus* (*H. faustus* and *H. digitatus*) from Maldives. *H. faustus* Bergh, 1878 (Valdes 2002) and *H. digitatus* Eliot, 1903 (Thompson 1972) are now synonyms of *H. sanguineus*. Maldives is located to the south of Lakshadweep Archipelago. Gardnier's expedition to the Maldives and Laccadive Archipelagos in



Fig. 1: *Hexabranchnus* cf. *sanguineus* from Andaman Island measuring 13 cm



Fig. 2: *Hexabranchnus* cf. *sanguineus* from Lakshadweep Island measuring 21 cm